

OLIVER RANCH CORE COMMITTEE
BLM Offices – 4701 N. Torrey Pines Dr.

Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. with the following members present:

Billie Young, Blaine Benedict, David Frommer, Henry Tom, Jackson Ramsey, John McCarty, Kuniaki Nagai, Les Wallach, Mark Morse, Michael Reiland, Nancy Flagg, Pat Williams, Patrick Putnam, Paul Buck, Peg Rees, Rob Mrowka, Tim O'Brien.

1. Status of the Project

Michael Reiland noted that it has been 5 years since the idea for the Oliver Ranch Science School (ORSS) came about. Now the project has evolved to the point of hiring an operator, perhaps within the next 3-4 months. The BLM will go out for competitive bids. Both the business plan and the curriculum need to get finalized over the next few months. The architectural design will be completed by the end of 2004.

Billie Young suggested that a project timeline/worksheet would be helpful to the committee, to help track progress over time. Michael agreed to put one together along with a Web site containing meeting minutes and the general direction of the project.

Michael was asked if the core committee would be involved in writing the statement of work for the school operator. He and Mark Morse said no, because some members of the committee may be interested in bidding. They may use the core committee, or a subcommittee, to review the proposals. The committee may also be asked to help develop the criteria for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Paul Buck asked if the operator would be expected to do fund-raising. If so, it would make a difference to those who might wish to bid. Mark stated that an endowment is being discussed.

Rob asked if the draft statement of work could be circulated to the core committee. Mark reiterated that doing so could be problematic because of interest among committee members to bid. BLM would be willing to circulate the final statement of work to the committee once it is publicly issued.

Paul Buck suggested holding a pre-proposal workshop with all potential bidders, where the proposal is explained to all participants. This method is used by National Science Foundation and has been successful. Mark concurred that it could be a good process, but minutes must be kept so that anyone who couldn't attend would have the same information.

Mark thanked Line and Space for the time they spent in Las Vegas, and he thanked UNLV for the CESU agreement. There has been a lot of work and foundation building over the past year. He is comfortable with the outreach that has taken place. The building blocks are in place, but there will be new building blocks to develop. The BLM expects the test wells to be in by the end of June, with water data to follow fairly soon thereafter. He suggested including updates on the Red Rock Visitor Center and other Red Rock projects on future core committee agendas, because they are all interrelated with the ORSS project. Michael agreed and noted that there may be some direct linkages as well – for example, there has been some discussion about moving the ORSS observatory over by the visitor center.

2. Status of NEPA

Michael noted that the contractor is online. The BLM is finalizing the statement of work. A decision has been made to complete an Environmental Assessment.

3. Line and Space Update

a. Attendance List from Public Forums. Les Wallach distributed an attendance list from the public forums his firm held in April. He was pleased by the number of neighbors who participated and felt that the Blue Diamond residents who attended came away seeing that the project is not all bad.

b. Activity List. Les also distributed an activity list and asked all core committee members to prioritize the top 10 activities they believe should take place at the school. This will help Line and Space prioritize, especially when/if budget becomes an issue.

c. Feedback on Public Forums. Les invited general feedback on the public sessions. Blaine felt there should have been more Clark County School District (CCSD) teachers in attendance. He asked about the plans to get a school district group together for more direct feedback. They are the customers and we need to get them onboard soon. Michael noted that part of the agreement with UNLV is public outreach to get all of these groups together. Paul Buck noted that many teachers are already involved through the Educational Programs Subcommittee. He felt it would be important to get the school principals involved with his subcommittee in order to show them the plans. The principals' permission would be needed in order to go on the campuses to directly solicit teachers' interest.

Blaine noted that it has been effective to take people out to the actual site. It might be helpful to have a tent where people could meet and participate in walking tours. Paul noted that the summer-time – although hot – is the best time to reach principals, because they are on 10-12 month contracts. David Frommer noted that Line and Space will be meeting with school district personnel this week and can get good feedback now.

Les stated that they hope to put together an essay contest district-wide to generate awareness. They may also do a questionnaire to all 5th grade teachers that would be easy to fill out and would help stimulate awareness of the project.

Kuniaki Nagai stated that his interest is in seeing how the environment is protected. He is impressed that students will be taught to love and protect nature, and he wants to see the project succeed.

Pat Putnam said he got good feedback from the Blue Diamond residents. They are looking forward to the presentation by Line and Space at the May 26 community meeting.

Paul Buck said he wrote a letter to Sen. Reid, urging him to support the project. He got a good response, with the senator saying he would support the ORSS. Paul sent the letter in order to counter the criticism from Blue Diamond residents that members of the Congressional delegation have been receiving.

Mark said that the BLM does need to keep accurate information flowing to the Congressional delegation. He will be briefing them sometime early next month. The BLM sent the delegation general answers to some of the questions they have been receiving from residents.

Rob Mrowka felt the public notice of the forums could have been better and more targeted. A two-week process was too overwhelming, especially for people who work. Most of the attendees were people already involved in the project.

Billie stated that a number of people thought the evening sessions were the only meetings they were permitted to attend, and some were insulted that they were held at UNLV when the project is sited in their neighborhood.

Pat Williams said that the agendas weren't clear to some people, and she thought the meetings should have been held at Red Rock.

David pointed out that UNLV was selected because it is centrally located in the valley. The project is for the entire community – not just the direct neighbors. This must not be lost sight of.

Jackson Ramsey said that the sessions didn't elicit much direct public input, but he felt a lot of worthwhile suggestions from people with knowledge of the project did come out of the sessions. The architects now have a lot more direction, and the options have been narrowed down.

Michael stated that public input can increase from this point forward, especially once a design and written plans are in place. It will provide something tangible that the public can react to.

Henry Tom noted the various announcements that were sent out. Ultimately, you can't force people to attend.

Mark reiterated that the core committee should serve as a conduit for public input and outreach.

d. Programming Document. In order to give the committee an idea of what the programming document will include and how it will be structured, Les provided the group with the draft table of contents for both the Science School and the Wild Horse & Burro Facility programming documents, along with a representative draft of one chapter.

The budget is problematic because people didn't think of all that was needed when the project was originally proposed. However, with the reduction in the number of beds, Les believes the final facility will total approximately 40,000 s.f. The final programming document will be delivered to BLM by June 18. It will be up to the BLM to circulate the document to the core committee.

Les informed the committee that at the May 26 Blue Diamond meeting his firm plans to show some slides of other projects they have worked on. The committee suggested that Line and Space emphasize that the school will only have a maximum of 3 classes of 35 students per class. The groups are further broken down into smaller groups of 8-12. Billie suggested emphasizing that the school won't be an eyesore from the road. John McCarty reported that visual resource management (VRM) within the BLM's General Management Plan dictates development and how conspicuous it can be. There are Class 2 constraints on this project within the General Management Plan. The notion of "key observation points" are important to the design. One has to look at how the development contrasts with its environment. Class 2 means that you can see it, but it doesn't draw your eye. John noted that the road through Red Rock is a key observation point, as are Spring Mountain State Park and Bonnie Springs. Context-sensitive design is important, and the existing trees on the site are important. He recommended nestling the project among the existing trees.

Les noted that he had asked Liz Warren to prioritize the historical importance of existing buildings on the site. She thought the original ranch house was most important, followed by the foundations to two other structures. Les thought it might be possible to save a remnant of the old ranch building and somehow incorporate it in the overall design. He also pointed out that all of the rock on the site will be re-used.

Blaine suggested that it might be possible to keep the foundation and short walls of the ranch building, without tearing the whole thing down. They could be used for teaching opportunities. Paul agreed and mentioned a project in Utah in which a cover has been placed over an archaeological site, which protects it while leaving it open to the public. Les liked the idea and thought a cover like that could serve as one of the shaded sites they plan to place on the property within the overall design.

4. Committee Reports

David reported that the Design Oversight Committee had met the day prior. They revised the mission statement and plan to keep the core committee updated on future activities related to the design and NEPA. Their next meeting has been set for June 15 at UNLV, directly following the next core committee meeting.

Michael distributed a list of subcommittees and asked for discussion on whether any should be disbanded. For example, Michael thought the Operations Committee may not need to meet until an operator is selected. Jackson noted, however, that the committee had developed a set of charges, and he would like it to have input into the statement of work. He will plan a meeting in June to discuss what level of involvement the Operations Committee wants in the selection of the operator.

Wild Horse & Burro – Billie thinks a meeting should be set, but they don't need to meet monthly.

Educational Programs – Paul will continue to hold regular meetings. He is setting up a meeting in the next few weeks with the CCSD members of the committee as well as some research faculty, to work on developing individual curricula and to integrate the research component into the educational component. These discussions will continue all summer. He requested that the agenda of the next core committee meeting contain an item to discuss the linkages between the curriculum and the selection of the operator.

Other Uses – Michael said this committee may not need to meet until a design is ready. Pat concurred.

Fund-Raising – Michael said this committee may not need to meet until later in the year, when more specific plans are ready that can be shown to potential donors.

Design Oversight – this committee will continue to meet regularly and plans to form a building advisory committee.

NEPA – this committee will meet tomorrow but then may not meet again for awhile.

5. Future Core Committee Meetings

Michael suggested that the committee not meet every month, unless needed. He will poll members between now and the June meeting. The next meeting will be held June 15 at 8:00 a.m. at the CCSD offices at 3950 S. Pecos (at McCleod).

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.